

of the two parties. In short, it serves both a literary and a historical purpose.

In these argumentative digressions on the questions at issue, Macaulay practises another device for enlisting the attention of his readers. The problem he had to solve, since he wished to secure the largest possible audience, was how to interest the mass of people who live entirely in the present and care nothing about the past for its own sake. What does interest such people is usually the politics of the day. Hence Macaulay never fails to refer to modern analogues to the seventeenth-century problems he is discussing. We get references to George II's scruples about the coronation oath,¹ Catholic Emancipation,² the Reform Bill,³ and the disruption of the Scottish church.⁴ Macaulay's political experiences enabled him to point his accounts of the parliamentary manners in the seventeenth century by allusions to the parliamentary manners of his own. Speaking, for instance, of a bill to disfranchise certain persons who had taken part in the oppressive acts of James II, he says :

The Tories did not venture to divide. The rules of the House put it in the power of a minority to obstruct the progress of a bill; and this was assuredly one of the very rare occasions on which that power would have been with great propriety exerted. It does not appear however that

the parliamentary tacticians of the
seventeenth century
were aware of the extent to which a small
number of mem-
bers can, without violating any form, retard
the course of
business,⁵

When he has to explain the fact that, in
1693, the Lords
supported the bill for triennial Parliaments
while the Com-

¹II, 1412-13 (xi). ²V, 2089-90 (xviii). ³V, 2287-8 (xix).
* IV, 1938 (xvi). * IV, 1780 (xv).